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REVISE

## LEAFLET NO. 92

## U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

# PREPARING WOOL FOR MARKET

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GOOD WOOL must be properly prepared and carefully handled in marketing to bring its full value. The market value of wool can be seriously reduced at the time of shearing by lack of preparation for market. Merchants sometimes spend a cent a pound in improving the appearance and value of the wool by turning and cleaning fleeces that they buy. Buyers consider this expense when they buy wool. Growers might just as well earn this money themselves by offering the wool in good condition in the first place. Choice wool attractively prepared can usually be sold even in a dull market.

### Shear When Wool is Dry

Excessive moisture is injurious to wool which, when damp, soon becomes moldy; the fibers rot and are weakened. Water stains the fleeces with a brown tinge which no scouring will remove. A fleece that is removed and rolled when damp is likely, later, to contain a large percentage of discolored wool. Musty wool is shunned by the buyers and it can be sold only at a sacrifice.

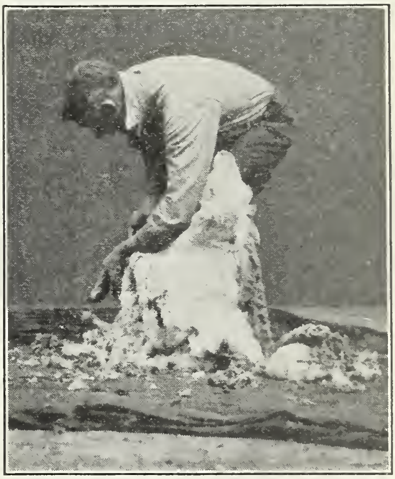

FIGURE 1.—Shearing must be carefully done.

### Shear on Clean Dry Surface

A wool grower who wishes to sell successfully must take great pains with his shearing. (Fig. 1.) He must keep his wool clean and attractive. Shearing should be done on a clean surface. A clean smooth board floor makes a good surface or shearing can be done on burlap or an old carpet. If the fleece falls on a dirty floor or on littered ground it will take up foreign substances and its value will be decreased.

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### Cut Close; Remove Fleece Unbroken

Shear close to the skin so a second cut will not be necessary. (Fig. 2.) Second cuts leave fibers that are too short to work properly in worsted machinery. They drop from the machines in the form of waste and are used in cheaper fabrics or are sold at a comparatively low price. Aim to remove the fleece unbroken. (Fig. 3.) If a fleece is broken during shearing the task of rolling and tying it immediately becomes more difficult. A broken fleece, even when rolled and tied, never looks as well as a whole one no matter how much care is used in bundling it. Moreover, when the fleece is in pieces it requires more time in the mill to divide the wool into its respective sorts.

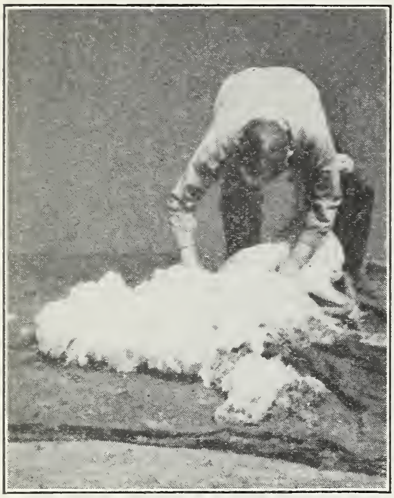

FIGURE 2.—Close shearing makes second cuts unnecessary.

### Tag Sheep Before Shearing

"Tag" the sheep; that is, remove heavy dung locks before shearing. Heavy locks left in the fleece stain the wool that comes in contact with them. Clip heavy locks from each animal and pack them separately; never bundle them in the fleece. Fleeces that contain an excessive quantity of tags or other foreign substances have a heavy or soggy feeling, and their price is discounted by expert buyers. Some manufacturers prefer foreign wool because it is clean; they know that all tags, heavy locks, etc., have been removed from Australian and South American wool before it enters our markets. The off sorts (tags, locks, etc.) are packed separately and sold at a discount.

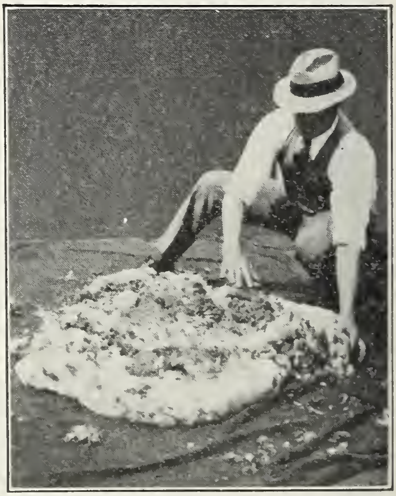

FIGURE 3.—This fleece was removed unbroken.

### Roll Fleece With Flesh Side Out

Always roll a fleece with the flesh side out, as this side presents a much brighter and far more attractive appearance than does the weather side. This is a vital point and growers should always keep it in mind. When rolling, spread the fleece with the flesh side down, fold in from the sides and ends, then roll from tail to neck. (Fig. 4.) This method will bring the shoulders and sides, or the best parts of the fleece, on the outside.

### Tie Each Fleece Separately

Tie each fleece separately. Even though tied properly, fleeces that are handled three or four times are somewhat torn. Untied fleeces invariably reach the manufacturer in poor condition. When fleeces are packed without being tied, it is impossible to grade and handle them satisfactorily. Use only enough twine to tie the fleece securely. The reason for tying fleeces is to put them in condition to be handled; once this is done, additional twine is objectionable and often means a discount in price. (Fig. 5.)

Do not roll fleeces too tightly or they will appear less desirable than they are. Fleeces that are "lofty" or springy are preferred; when displayed for sale, they quickly attract the attention of the buyers.

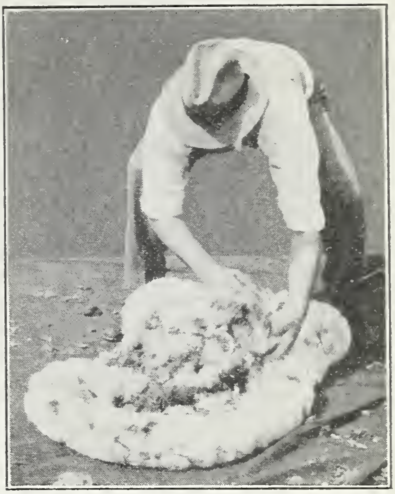

FIGURE 4.—Rolling the fleece with flesh side out.

## Use Good Paper Twine

The kind of tying material used is a most important point. Paper twine is best. Use of sisal, rough jute, or hemp twines for tying fleeces means the loss of thousands of dollars annually to wool manufacturers. (Fig. 6.) This harmful practice is followed chiefly in the Eastern and Middle Western States. Some manufacturers discriminate against and penalize wool from these sections because of this practice. When a rough, loosely constructed fiber twine is used, the fibers become detached, cling to the wool, and pass undetected through each process of manufacture. They cause costly defects in the finished fabric because they are vegetable fibers and will not take a wool dye. Standard paper fleece twine, made especially for tying fleeces, meets every requirement of the wool growers' associations, wool-trade associations, and manufacturers. (Fig. 7.) Pieces of paper twine that may be overlooked by the sorter in the mill cause no damage, since twine of this nature disintegrates in the scouring bowls or is lost in the various processes of manufacture.

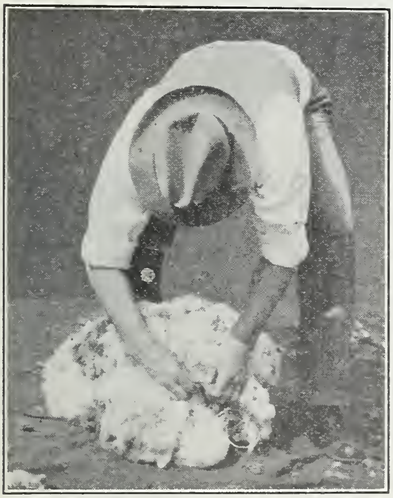

FIGURE 5.—Tying the fleece with paper twine.

## Keep Wool Free from Trash

Straw, chaff, sticks, burs, and other extraneous matter should be prevented from mixing with the wool. Burs and other vegetable matter entangled in the fleeces often cannot be entirely removed by the ordinary methods of manufacture. Additional chemical or mechanical treatment, such as carbonizing or bur picking, is necessary to eliminate these particles from the fibers. This increases the cost of manufacture and the fiber is often injured in the operation.

## Pack Fleeces in Regulation Bags

Fleeces in regulation-size wool bags present a more attractive appearance than do fleeces shipped in sacks of varying sizes, shapes, and makes. If there is any doubt whether the insides of the bags are clean, they should be turned and shaken well before being used. Frequently a dirty sack causes dirty wool. To use any kind of sack that happens to be handy is expensive in the end.

### Store in Dry Clean Place

If removed from the sheep when dry and if properly stored, wool deteriorates very slowly and can be successfully stored for long periods. Fleeces should be protected from dampness, for wool stored in a damp place is damaged and acquires a musty odor that no airing or drying will remove. If the floor is damp, the fleeces that come in direct contact with it absorb moisture and the fibers are stained and weakened. Fleeces that have been stored in a light, dry place receive much more consideration from prospective purchasers.

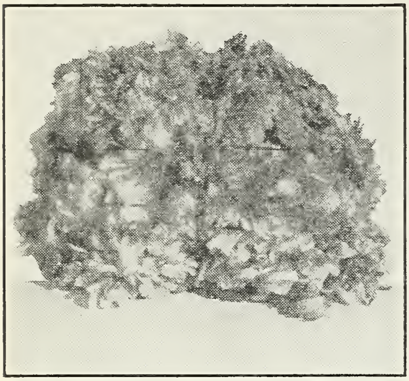

Figure 6.—A well-prepared fleece.

### Pack Each Kind Separately

Keep the burry, seedy, and cotted or closely matted fleeces, and the dead, black, and gray fleeces separate from the clean, merchantable white wool, and pack them separately. Each of these kinds of wool, commonly known as rejections or discounts, has a limited use or requires additional costly processes in manufacture. When they are packed separately, they can be sold for what they are worth and the sound fleeces are not so liable to discounts or rejections. It is possible that the buyer's estimate of the percentage of inferior wool contained will be liberal enough to take care of any error on his part when proper sortings have not been made.

### Use Small Brand Mark and Good Fluid

When sheep are branded, growers should always remember that the branding substance must be removed, with considerable waste and expense, before the wool enters the manufacturing processes. The brand should be small, and only one mark should be made on each animal. Only fluids that are suitable for branding should be used. Tar or its products, or common house paints, are never suitable. Only enough branding fluid should be used to make a clear and durable mark. An excessive quantity of insoluble branding substance on the fleece often causes costly defects in the finished product. In the mills the "painty" wool must be carefully clipped by hand, and this process adds cost; even more serious is the loss caused by small pieces that escape the attention of the wool sorter. These appear in the finished fabric as defects, such as paint specks and tar stains.

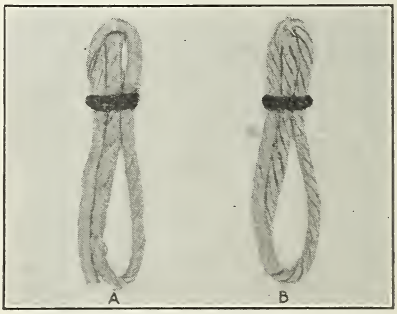

Figure 7.—Approved fleece twines: A, Single-plypaper twine; B, 4-ply paper twine.

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